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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONROVIA 000722

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2019

TAGS: KDEM PGOV PHUM PINS PREL ASEC SG GV LI

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SIRLEAF TO CONTINUE TO PRESS DADIS; CONCERNED  
ABOUT LIBERIANS BEING RECRUITED

REF: (A) STATE 102575; (B) MONROVIA 270

Classified by: Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield for Reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: President Sirleaf does not believe another visit to Conakry would be useful, but will continue to work with Wade, Gbagbo and Ibn Chambas on pressing Dadis to step down. She suggested a "demonstration of force" would help limit the bloodshed. Liberian security services are picking up reports that Liberian fighters are being recruited, and the GOL is considering several steps, including closing the border, to prevent that. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador raised Ref A points with President Sirleaf October 2, noting that Embassy Dakar would make a similar demarche to President Wade. Sirleaf said that she would call Wade that same day to discuss next steps. Ambassador said that we would be asking Wade to consider "a way out" for Dadis. Sirleaf responded that a departure of Dadis without a transfer of power in place could lead to more chaos, asking "what would be our fallback position?" She noted that during her visit to Conakry September 12 (Ref B) Dadis had said that if he announced he was not running or was leaving power in order to run, someone else would try to kill him and take power.

¶3. (C) Sirleaf said that she did not believe another visit to Conakry would be useful. Dadis would try to use the visit as a show of support for himself as he did on her last visit, and may be misunderstood by the opposition. Calling the situation in Guinea "reminiscent of Liberia in 1980," she said that they had warned Dadis that that the initial "euphoria" will quickly turn.

¶4. (C) She suggested that a "demonstration of force" by the AU, ECOWAS or the ICG-Guinea would help. She has asked National Security Advisor Fahnbullah to raise with the French the possibility of sending the French naval vessel presently in Liberia to be positioned off the coast of Conakry (Note: the French aviso class vessel "Lieutenant de vaisseau Lavallee" presently on a ship visit in Liberian waters. End note.) She also said that if some helicopters were sent over Conakry it would have a strong deterring effect. She said that if there had been a similar show of force in Liberia in 2003, "the war would have been over" sparing hundreds of lives, but "the human rights people" prevented it.

¶5. (C) Sirleaf noted that Ibn Chambas was looking to sending General Babangida to Conakry. Ambassador urged ECOWAS to continue efforts to seek a mediator, and Sirleaf agreed, saying ECOWAS needs to send a commission now. Sirleaf said that she has also been in communication with Ivorian president Gbagbo. Gbagbo is ready to meet as MRU, but will not travel to Conakry. Dadis will not leave Conakry. She has invited the Guinean prime minister to come to Monrovia, although she is not certain how much influence he has. (Note: SRSG Ellen Loej told us separately that she had heard that the AU had named Burkina Faso president Blaise Compaore to be the Special Mediator. End Note.)

Liberians Fighters to Guinea

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¶6. (C) Sirleaf said that her security services are picking up

information that "ex-LURD" fighters are being recruited for Guinea. She said she would reach out to former LURD leaders Kabineh Ja'neh, Jackson Doe and Zoe Pennue to try to stop the recruitment (Note: Ja'neh, presently in Paris is now an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court; Jackson was until recently Minister of Post and Telecommunications, and is now an advisor to the President; Pennue is now a Representative. End note.) She noted that Dadis is from an ethnic group with ties to the Kpelle community in Liberia, which may be helping in the recruitment. She said that her security services are also picking up that Fulah fighters are moving to Guinea to support Diallo (Note: Liberian Fulah are ethnically tied to Guinean Peul. End note.)

¶17. (C) She has instructed Minister of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism Laurence Bropleh to issue a statement warning that any Liberians who travel to Guinea to join factions will be "penalized." She said that the GOL is also considering closing the border to prevent the travel of fighters. The Ambassador warned that closing the border might prevent potential refugees from entering Liberia. Sirleaf took note of the problem, asking rhetorically, "can you close a border in just one direction?"

¶18. (C) Comment: Sirleaf appears to be seized with the issue. Separately, SRSG Loej told Ambassador that the President told her on September 30 that she has not wavered on her push to bring a resolution to Guinea, and repeated her fear that war in Guinea would shatter the peace in Liberia. Sirleaf used the majority of her remarks during the Nigeria National Day celebrations October 1 to express her firm commitment to the restoration of democracy in Guinea. It appears that both are in response to Ambassador's comments to her on September 28 that Liberia is being seen as lukewarm. End Comment.

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THOMAS-GREENFIELD